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SOME CARTOONS OF FIFTY YEARS AGO

BY WM. HENRY FORMAN

Illustrated from drawings by Daniel Maclise.

In the last year of the reign of George the Fourth, there lived in London town, one Hugh Fraser, a Bohemian of the day and a barrister by profession. As he seldom held a brief, he employed his abundant leisure in writing things he could rarely get published. He was on terms of intimacy with Doctor William Maginn, an exceedingly clever poet, journalist, and miscellaneous writer. The two men had much in common, though in one respect they differed greatly, for Fraser was generally sober, while Maginn was habitually drunk.

To the ingenious mind of Fraser it occurred that it would be a good thing to start a Tory review, to which the principal contributor should be Maginn. To find a publisher of the projected review was not easy. Another Fraser, however, James by name, a canny Scot from Inverness, had long been a prosperous publisher in London. He was not related to Hugh, except in being of the same clan, which, among Scotchmen, counts for a good deal. James Fraser was persuaded by Maginn and his confederate to start the review, and in February, 1830, the first number appeared, with the title of *Fraser's Magazine*, it being named for its projector and not for its publisher.

With the first three or four issues, principally from the pen of Maginn, the magazine had not made much headway, and it was determined to arouse public attention by an illustration in each number, in the shape of a series of portraits, under the title of "The Gallery of Illustrious Literary Characters." For drawing these portraits the owners of the periodical had the rare good luck to secure the services of Daniel Mac-

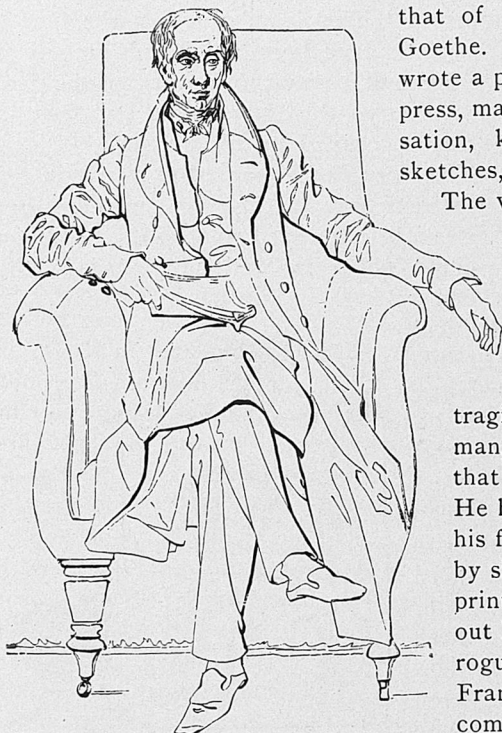
lise, then somewhere between twenty-five and thirty years old, but who, before he died, produced some of the greatest historical paintings of the English school. Yet, even when he began the series of portraits for *Fraser*—a series which numbered eighty-one, and continued until 1838



the miniature de Talleyrand

—he was a masterly draughtsman, scarcely rivalled by any British artist before or since. His line was somewhat cold and strict, but full of spirit and expression, as elastic and as firm as steel. The portraits, which were signed "Alfred Croquis" beside their wonderful technical skill, had great variety of idea. Some verge on good-humored caricature, others are simply elegant and familiar likenesses.

Some, again, are almost cruel in their truth, like that of Samuel Rogers, which frightened Goethe. For each of these portraits Maginn wrote a page of comment. His humorous letter-press, made incisive by the necessity of condensation, kept pace with Maclise's inimitable sketches, which were beautifully cut on copper.



The volumes containing these pictures may be turned at random, and there is not one from which, with its accompanying text, cannot be derived amusement and instruction. Take the portrait of Talleyrand, published in 1833. The satire of the picture is tragic in its intensity. The eminent Frenchman, then in his seventy-ninth year, was at that time French ambassador to England. He had, as is well known, a defect in one of his feet which he was accustomed to conceal by sitting in the manner represented in the print. His character was notorious throughout Europe. Everyone knew that he was a rogue, but a rogue whom no government in France could do without. He had great command over his countenance, and what he was he managed to conceal when he was awake. It is only, however, in waking hours that such concealment can be made. The artist, by depicting the unprincipled and selfish rascal asleep, seems almost to have revealed in the strong lines the frauds

and villainies and perjuries of three-score years.

In a totally different vein is the noble and dignified head of Wordsworth, then about sixty-two. No man of his generation had been so much praised and abused. With the abuse politics had much to do. Wordsworth was a sturdy Tory and the Whig critics fell foul of him with keen zest. As Wordsworth sits here in his easy chair, we see in his countenance the calm serenity with which he bore the abuse heaped upon him. He had faith in himself, a faith which time has justified.

Maclise could have found no better subject for his satire than Robert Montgomery, whose name has been kept alive by being pickled in the vinegar of Maclise. Montgomery began his literary life by writing what he was pleased to term poems, of which the critics made all sorts of fun. The artist humors Montgomery's pretensions by representing him swinging on a chair in the see-saw



Munster

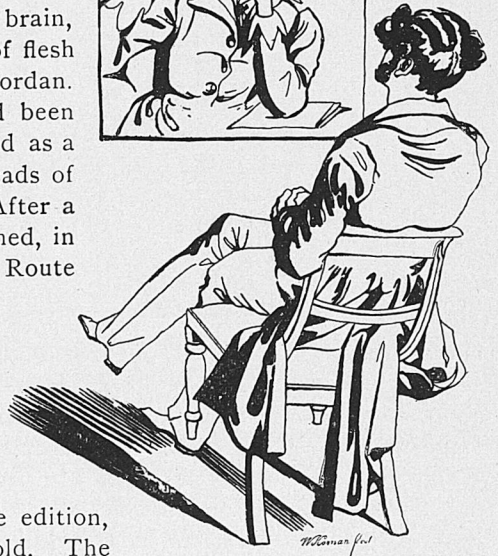
fashion of his verse, and with uncravated throat in the style of Lord Byron. As he was a religious bard, his hands are clasped in adoration of the picture he is worshipping, which is a representation of himself, while his upturned eye and uplifted pen denote that he is in quest of the inspiration of the Muse. Over the picture hovers a lubber-fiend, of whom the face is said to have been a faithful likeness of Clarkson, a well-known critic of the day.

George the Fourth died in 1830 and was succeeded by his brother William. The Tory *Fraser* wanted to offer homage in some way to the new sovereign, but was a little puzzled what to do. William could not very well be placed in the

"Gallery," for he had never distinguished himself by pen or tongue.

The only accomplishment he had ever cultivated with his tongue was hard

swearing. He had no children of his brain, but he had ten (illegitimate) children of flesh and blood, sons and daughters of Mrs. Jordan. The eldest of these, born in 1794, had been created Earl of Munster, had been bred as a soldier, and been promoted over the heads of older and far more deserving men. After a journey through India he had published, in 1819, a quarto entitled "Journal of a Route across India and through Egypt to England in 1817-18." Although the book showed much observation, it could hardly be put under the head of literature. It was, however, undeniably a book, although the publishers had been unable to sell it, and the author afterwards bought up the whole edition, save the few copies which had been sold. The volume furnished *Fraser* with the desired excuse for courting favor with the king, and the Earl appeared as an Illustrious Literary Character. There can be little doubt that Maclise made a good likeness of him, depicting him as a respect-



Maclise

able man of middle age, with military air and a general-officer's accoutrements.

With none of the subjects of the artist has time dealt so hardly as with Don Telesforo de Trueba y Cozio. That he was man of much notoriety in 1832 is certain, or his portrait would not have appeared in the "Gallery," although fun is made of him by depicting him as dancing and occupied in turning his spectacled eyes from his partner and all other persons whatever, upon the far more lovely shadow of himself. He is ridiculed by Fraser unjustly. The fact is that he was an industrious and by no means despicable writer, who at the age of thirty had produced a comedy, several passable novels in three volumes each and a few serious works, one of which was republished in New York. Leigh Hunt thought Trueba's comedy, "The Exquisites," of sufficient importance to review it seriously in *The Tatler*. Trueba died at thirty-five and his works have sunk into oblivion like his name.

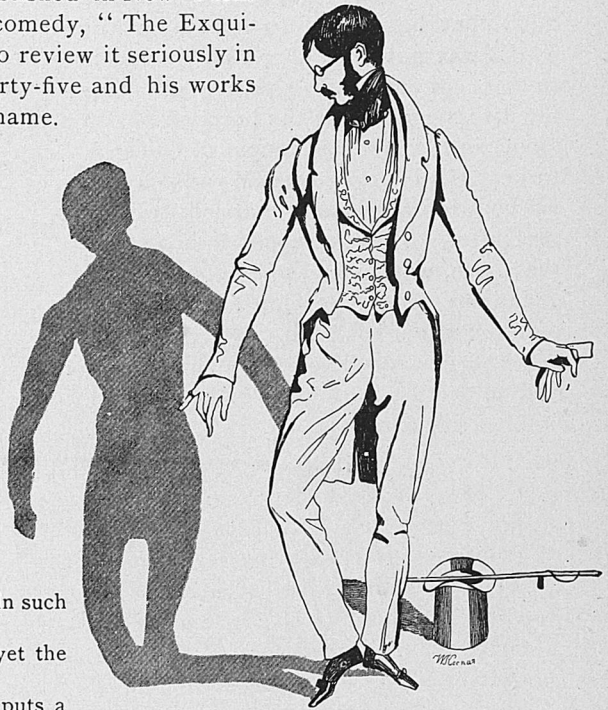
At the sight of the portrait of Hogg, Maginn breaks forth into epic verse:

Clear ye your pipes, O muses, and
sing of the Shepherd of Ettrick—
Hogg, from the mountain of Ben
ger, invading the city of London!
Opposite see he stands, wrapt
round in pastoral mantle,
Covering his shoulders broad. His
hand is graced with the bonnet
Such as the shepherds wear in the
lowland country of Scotland.
Comelily curled is his nose; his eye
has a pleasantish twinkle.
Open his honest mouth, whence
flowed such rivers of verses,
(Whither, we need not say, flowed in such
gallons of toddy).
So does he look in the morn, ere yet the
goblet or tumbler
Pours forth its copious stores, and puts a
cock in his eyelid.

Years have also dealt hard-
ly with the name and fame of
Hogg. Poetry in the Scotch
dialect has long been out of
fashion. No one ever reads

now his tedious long poems. A few of his ballads are still printed and sung, but it is doubtful if those who read and hear them know the name of the author.

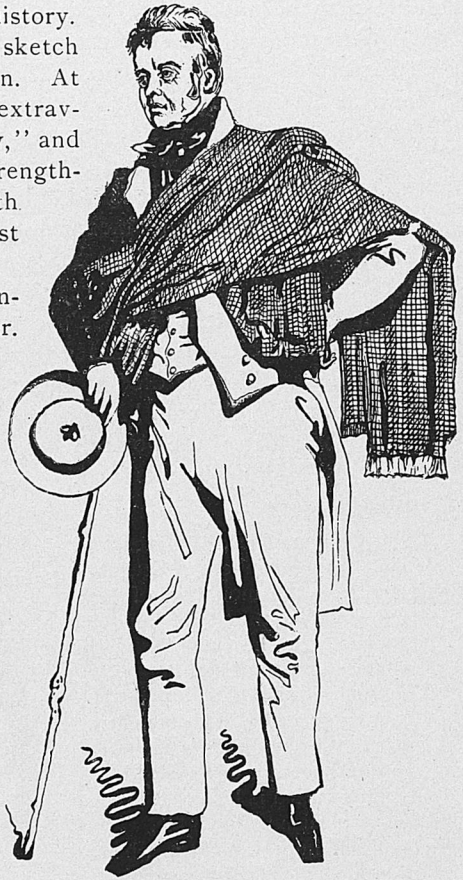
One of Maclise's subjects, however, has no reason to complain of the effects of time. For many a long year to come will survive the name of Benjamin Disraeli. In the picture of him here, the artist seems desirous of idealizing the dandyism of the day. There appears to have been a motive in Disraeli's exquisite dress, and a desire to keep the world talking about him. Several years after this portrait was drawn, an English lady declared she had met him at a party dressed in green velvet trousers and a black satin shirt. His death in 1881 ended a career which is



John Leighton
Don Telesforo de Trueba y Cozio

one of the most extraordinary in English history. Though but twenty-eight, in 1833, when this sketch was made, he was already a well-known man. At twenty-two he burst upon the town with his extravagant, audacious and sparkling "Vivian Grey," and the novels from his pen which followed it strengthened the impression made by that book. With all this he was constantly seen in the most elegant London society.

To Lord Melbourne, in 1835, Disraeli confided that he wished to be Prime Minister. Yet it was not until 1837 that he was able to make an entry into public life, as one of the two members for the borough of Maidstone, in the first Parliament of Queen Victoria. His colleague was Wyndham Lewis, whose widow Disraeli married two years thereafter. No one supposed in 1833, that the youth, who looked so innocent and even effeminate, would develop a power of vituperation which has been rarely equalled and never surpassed—a power which nearly worried to death Sir Robert Peel and found its



James Hogg



Disraeli

match in Dan O'Connell only, who shut for a time the mouth of the vituperator, by calling him "The lineal descendant and true heir-at-law of the impenitent thief who died on the cross." Everyone knows that Disraeli's maiden speech in Parliament was jeered at and ridiculed without mercy, until he was forced to sit down, with half the words he had planned to say unuttered. Still, then, as in the gloomiest moments of his subsequent career, he lost neither heart nor hope. He lived to sit in the House of Commons for nearly forty years, to become its leader, and to have his lightest word listened to with profound attention.